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REPORT ON DOCUMENTATION AND PUBLICATIONS

Report by the UNCTAD secretariat

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Guiding principles and objectives of UNCTAD's publications policy

The fundamental principles of UNCTAD's publications policy are to:

- **Provide a vehicle for achieving the objectives of UNCTAD's member States.**
- **Give expression to UNCTAD's development mission and to its policy research and analytical work , which must illuminate the changes in the global economy, facilitate policy formulation within member States, lead to constructive policy dialogue among member States, respond to different and changing developmental needs, be action-oriented, and provide guidance on national policies and on an enabling environment conducive to trade and development.**
- **Contribute to the goals established for United Nations publications by: promoting the purposes and principles of the United Nations; contributing directly to the achievement of one or more of UNCTAD's programme activities; responding to an identified demand from a clearly defined target readership; reaching a standard of intellectual endeavour that reflects credit on the United Nations; and not substantially duplicating material already published and readily available.**
- **Underpin more closely the intergovernmental debate in UNCTAD and thus contribute to the process of dialogue, consensus-building and policy formulation on the major issues covered by the work programme.**
- **Provide a tool for human resource and institutional development in accordance with the capacity-building thrust of UNCTAD's technical cooperation programme.**
- **Create public awareness of UNCTAD's role in the development debate.**

In implementing its publications policy UNCTAD should seek to:

- **Assimilate modern technologies in order to improve UNCTAD's impact and outreach.**
- **Make the most cost-effective use of resources.**
- **Improve marketing and sales.**

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INTRODUCTION

1. At its forty-third session, in October 1996, the Trade and Development Board reviewed UNCTAD's publications policy in accordance with paragraph 107 (a) of "A Partnership for Growth and Development" adopted at UNCTAD IX. On that occasion the Board had before it a secretariat report entitled "Review of UNCTAD's publications policy" (TD/B/43/CRP.4). The latter concluded that a number of circumstances had made it necessary to undertake a reappraisal of UNCTAD's publications policy and suggested that the exercise be carried out by the Task Force on Documentation and Publications created by the Secretary-General of UNCTAD in the context of the United Nations-wide Efficiency Review under way at that time.[1] Endorsing this approach, the Board agreed that the Secretary-General would first review the report of the Task Force, which was to be completed by March 1997, and subsequently report to the Board.

2. In accordance with that decision, the Task Force has conducted a reappraisal of UNCTAD's publications policy. In so doing, it has been guided by the conclusions reached in the above-mentioned report (TD/B/43/CRP.4); by the factors identified by the Board in its agreed conclusions 439 (XLIII); and by the instructions issued as part of the ongoing review of the United Nations-wide publications policy. The latter is a particularly important factor since UNCTAD is an integral part of the United Nations; as such, its publications must not only comply with the criteria which apply system-wide, but also contribute to the goals set out for United Nations publications. The Task Force also held consultations with relevant entities in the UNCTAD secretariat, the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG) and United Nations Headquarters, as well as with member States. In this context, meetings were held with the coordinators of country groupings and with individual regional groups and delegations.

3. This report contains the Task Force's findings, which have been endorsed by the Secretary-General of UNCTAD. It first explains the role of publications in UNCTAD (chapter I) and describes some recent trends (chapter II). It then reviews the planning, production, dissemination and assessment phases and makes recommendations in each of those areas that constitute the basic elements of a new publications policy (chapter III). The report concludes with a proposal to create a Publications Committee within the secretariat to oversee the effective implementation of the publications policy (chapter IV).

I. THE ROLE OF PUBLICATIONS IN UNCTAD

4. The value-added of knowledge-based development institutions derives from their capacity to produce new thinking through their research capability and from the accumulated experience of development problems obtained from their operational activities. This is true of UNCTAD. A constant of UNCTAD's pursuit of its development mission since its founding has in fact been its capacity to serve as a centre for research, conceptual innovation and policy analysis, and thus as a generator of ideas and policy initiatives.

5. The importance of these functions was reaffirmed at UNCTAD IX. The Midrand Declaration states that "UNCTAD's policy research and analytical work must illuminate the changes in the global economy as they relate to trade, investment, technology, services and development. Such work must facilitate policy formulation within member States as they strive for development. It must lead to constructive policy dialogue among member States to enhance benefits to trade. It must respond to different and changing developmental needs in the ongoing process of integration in the global economy." The Conference also emphasized that "UNCTAD's work should be action-oriented and provide guidance on national policies and on an enabling environment conducive to trade and development." These same guidelines have been incorporated in the UNCTAD programme of the United Nations Medium-term Plan for the period 1998-2001 adopted by the General Assembly in December 1996.

6. UNCTAD's inherent potential for making a meaningful contribution to the attainment of these objectives can only be realized if the results of its research and the lessons derived from its field operations reach the diverse individuals and institutions which influence, shape and implement policies in member States. In this sense, the effective and wide dissemination of information plays an indispensable role in the fulfilment of mandates.

7. While performing this role, UNCTAD's publications have succeeded in attracting a large and diversified readership. This includes politicians, parliamentarians and policy-makers; academics and other independent experts; and representatives of NGOs, business, labour and the media, both in the developing and the developed world.

8. In UNCTAD the act of publishing represents the culmination of a relatively long process of research and analysis. It is an activity, moreover, which absorbs a proportionately small amount of resources. UNCTAD's printing expenses, for example, are equivalent to about 1.5 per cent of its total budget. It is also pertinent to note that in the United Nations tradition and culture, which have been largely shaped by member States, a written text is almost always the end product of a secretariat work activity. Indeed, the secretariat's performance is measured in terms of the proportion of planned activities/outputs which have been completed in any given year. Since an output which does not carry a document identification symbol is not considered by the OIOS as having been produced, the underlying assumption is that an output is a written document/publication. Such considerations must be taken into account in any review of UNCTAD's publications policy.

9. Another relevant factor is last year's landmark Conference, as a result of which both the intergovernmental and secretariat structures have been streamlined and the work programme refocused to reflect the priorities of member States. These reforms bear important implications for UNCTAD's publications policy. In the post-Midrand scenario, it is essential that publications mirror these new approaches and become an effective component of the institution's strategy for carrying out its mandated task of promoting the integration of developing countries into the world economy. For example, they should: underpin more closely the intergovernmental debate in UNCTAD and thus contribute to the process of dialogue, consensus-building and policy formulation on the major issues covered by the work programme; shed light and promote scholarly discussion on the implications for development of topical issues and developments; and serve as a tool for human resource and institutional development, in accordance with the capacity-building thrust of UNCTAD's technical cooperation programme. Last but not least, publications should stimulate intellectual endeavour among the secretariat staff, and create public awareness of UNCTAD's role in the development debate.

10. The achievement of such diverse objectives is a considerable challenge. It calls for a publications policy that is at once focused yet flexible, comprehensive yet manageable. For this purpose, existing mechanisms, guidelines and procedures have been scrutinized and proposals have been made to adapt them to current requirements. In the process, due consideration has been given to the concerns of UNCTAD's member States, to the relevant guidelines established by United Nations Headquarters in response to General Assembly resolutions and to the recent decisions taken by the Secretary-General of the United Nations. While seeking to meet these diverse requirements, an attempt has also been made at identifying possibilities for further rationalization, defined as the pursuit of a more cost-effective use of limited resources.

II. RECENT TRENDS IN UNCTAD'S PUBLICATIONS

11. For the purposes of the programme budget, written material is grouped under five main headings: (i) parliamentary documentation, consisting essentially of reports and background papers prepared for meetings of UNCTAD's intergovernmental bodies and for those of other bodies such as the General Assembly and ECOSOC, as well as the official records of such meetings; (ii) recurrent publications, both mandated and discretionary, including monthly bulletins, yearbooks, statistical and other handbooks, research papers such as the *Discussion Papers* series and annual thematic reports such as the *Trade and Development Report (TDR)*, the *World Investment Report (WIR)* and the *Least Developed Countries Report (LDCR)*; (iii) non-recurrent mandated and discretionary publications, consisting mainly of studies, reports or monographs as well as one-off publications such as reports of seminars or collections of country case studies; (iv) technical material, including such items as data bases, computer software, directories, bibliographies and specialized technical papers; and (v) information materials, including newsletters, bulletins, pamphlets and brochures, press releases, video and audio tapes.

12. The volume and content of UNCTAD's publications have evolved over time in response to new circumstances, particularly changes in the work programme. Thus, UNCTAD's programme budget proposals to the Secretary-General of the United Nations for the biennium 1998-1999 envisage a total of 217 recurrent and non-recurrent publications (each recurrent title has multiple issues). Compared with the 1996-1997 (pre-Midrand) programme budget approved by the General Assembly, which included 254 such publications, the proposed volume of publications for the next biennium therefore represents a 15 per cent reduction (table on the next page).

13. The content of the publications programme has also changed, as may be seen from a comparison of pre- and post-Midrand budget proposals. The table gives a breakdown into subprogrammes, with certain assumptions having been made on the correspondence between pre- and post-Midrand subprogrammes.

14. A reduction of nearly 33 per cent in publications has been proposed for subprogramme 9.1 (Globalization and Development), reflecting mainly the rationalization of various statistical publications. On the other hand, there is an increase for subprogramme 9.2 (Investment, Enterprise Development and Technology) due to a higher figure for non-recurrent publications. For subprogramme 9.3 (International Trade in Goods and Services, and Commodities), a slight decrease is the result of a reduction in non-recurrent publications, reflecting a decision to bundle them into recurrent series in order to improve outreach and quality control. The total for subprogramme 9.4 (Services Infrastructure for Development and Trade Efficiency) remains unchanged at a relatively low level, reflecting the heavy weight of technical cooperation activities in this subprogramme's work. Finally, the publications envisaged for subprogramme 9.5 (Least Developed, Land-locked and Island Developing Countries) will be far fewer than before, reflecting the coordinating role that the newly-established Office of the Coordinator will play.

15. The shift in emphasis that has occurred as a result of UNCTAD IX is also reflected in the comparison of pre-and post-Midrand percentage shares shown in the last column of the table. Reflecting the Conference's intent, Investment, Technology and Enterprise Development, International Trade in Goods and Services, and Commodities, and Services Infrastructure for Development and Trade Efficiency will all account for increased shares of UNCTAD's reduced publications output in the next biennium. The overall contraction in the volume of UNCTAD's publications and the increased importance of the above-mentioned sub-programmes in terms of planned publications for 1998-1999 represent a first, significant exercise in rationalization.

Table

Trends in UNCTAD's publications
(percentage shares in brackets)

	Recurrent publications		Non-recurrent publications	Total
	No. of series (a)	No. of issues (b)	(c)	(b) + (c)
Approved programme budget, 1996-1997				
EDM	2	10	0	10 (4 %)
subprogramme 9.1	9	78	2	80 (31 %)
subprogramme 9.2	11	38	24	62 (24 %)
subprogramme 9.3	7	16	39	55 (22 %)
subprogramme 9.4	7	10	20	30 (12 %)
subprogramme 9.5	1	2	15	17 (7 %)
Total	**37**	**154**	**100**	**254** (100 %)
Proposed programme budget, 1998-1999				
EDM	2	4	0	4 (2 %)
subprogramme 9.1	7	37	17	54 (25 %)
subprogramme 9.2	7	27	43	70 (32 %)
subprogramme 9.3	10	41	13	54 (25 %)
subprogramme 9.4	6	18	12	30 (14 %)
subprogramme 9.5	1	2	3	5 (2 %)
Total	**33**	**129**	**88**	**217** (100 %)

16. A classification of UNCTAD's publications on a substantive rather than a programmatic basis was carried out based on the *Guide to UNCTAD Publications 1995*, which provided the most recent, comprehensive description of publications already published. A total of 233 publications were reviewed, counting a series of newsletters or brochures with several issues as one publication, and excluding reports to intergovernmental meetings by the secretariat, for which the information was incomplete. Of the total, about one-fifth (49 publications) were identified as reports, proceedings or reporting on the outcomes of meetings. The remaining 184 could be more properly considered as publications: 10 per cent (18 publications) of these were sales publications. Including these sales publications, more than half of the total reviewed (128 publications) were identified as studies or papers, whereas about one-fifth (42 publications) consisted of directories, statistics, market trend analyses, guidebooks, information on UNCTAD activities, etc. The remaining 11 publications dealt with legal matters and also included three series (10 issues in total) of newsletters or brochures. These figures show that UNCTAD primarily publishes substantive studies and papers, from which policy analysis in parliamentary documentation or materials used for technical cooperation are drawn.

III. A PUBLICATIONS POLICY FOR UNCTAD

A. Compliance with Mandates and the Planning Phase

Provision of mandates

17. UNCTAD's publications are primarily a vehicle for achieving the objectives set by its member States. Indeed, the publications programme is the outcome of a consultative process involving the secretariat and member States. Within the overall framework provided by the United Nations publications policy, however, UNCTAD as an author department is responsible for the substantive content of its publications. It formulates its publications programme based on relevant mandates and makes the necessary budgetary provisions.

18. Under current practice, publications are included in the Secretary-General's proposed programme budget in accordance with the United Nations programme planning rules. Under these rules, legislative mandates for publications are provided by requests and directives contained in resolutions and decisions of intergovernmental bodies. The specificity of such mandates varies according to the working methods of the legislative bodies concerned. In some cases it may, for example, consist of legislation establishing an organizational entity or providing a general mandate for its work, without necessarily making a specific reference to a publication.

19. The latter reflects the situation in UNCTAD after UNCTAD IX, which established a new work programme covering a four-year period. This decision coincided with the United Nations-wide requirement to draft the Medium-term Plan for 1998-2001 for review and adoption by the General Assembly. The adoption in December 1996 by the General Assembly of the UNCTAD component of the Medium-term Plan constitutes a significant legislative mandate for the proposed new activities.

Review of publications programme proposals

20. The review of mandates for publications is an established part of the programme planning process of the United Nations governing the preparation and approval of the programme budget. After UNCTAD IX the secretariat drafted a publications programme in the context of the programme budget for the 1998-1999 biennium based on the UNCTAD IX mandate and aimed at implementing the strategy set out in the Medium-term Plan. On this basis, and in conformity with the Conference's invitation (para. 107 (a)), the Secretary-General of UNCTAD submitted his proposed publications programme to the Working Party on the Medium-term Plan and Programme Budget (Working Party). Taking into account the guidance received by member States, which included a suggestion to conduct a survey of the proposed publications for 1998-1999, the Secretary-General then transmitted his proposals to the Programme Planning and Budget Division of the United Nations Secretariat in New York and also to the interdepartmental Publications Board.

21. The final text constituting the programme budget proposals of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the General Assembly will be reviewed by the Working Party at the second part of its 29th session in May. The Working Party transmits its comments directly to the intergovernmental review machinery in New York. This consists of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC), which determines whether the proposed programme fulfils legislative mandates and does not duplicate other activities/publications inside and outside the United Nations; and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), an expert body of the General Assembly which examines resource levels and their distribution. The views of these bodies are in turn submitted to the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly which has the final say in the matter. UNCTAD's member States, therefore, have a further opportunity to influence the content of the publications programme during the New York intergovernmental process.

22. The list of approved UNCTAD publications which ensues from this sequenced, multilayered process will constitute the road-map for the UNCTAD secretariat over the 1998-1999 biennium. Here it should be emphasized that UNCTAD is unique in the United Nations system in that its proposals are subject to intergovernmental scrutiny both in Geneva and in New York, apart from the customary internal review by the Secretariat in New York. No change seems necessary, therefore, in a procedure for implementing mandates that is characterized by such a high degree of transparency and rigour.

23. At the same time, past experience suggests that the period of time which intervenes between the receipt of instructions from New York for the making of programme budget proposals (typically November) and the deadline for submission (end December) is inadequate for a proper evaluation to be carried out of the proposals made by Divisions concerning the publications to be included in the proposed programme budget, and for their early consideration by the Working Party. It is, therefore, proposed that

- ***The preparatory process for the submission of UNCTAD's programme budget proposals, particularly the part relating to publications, should start by September, some 16 months prior to the new biennium. In this way, when the time comes for the Secretary-General to share his proposed publications programme with the Working Party before a submission is made to New York, he will be able to present a list of publications that has been through a more systematic screening process than has been the case so far. The objectives of this exercise would be: to ensure strict compliance with mandates and relevant guidelines; to aim for a greater focus on priority activities; to avoid duplication or overlap; and to explore the potential for merging/eliminating publications, or sections thereof, and thereby achieve a more cost-effective use of resources. The target audience for each publication should also be identified at this stage, as should the languages into which it would be translated as well as the medium of distribution.***

- ***The above exercise would be greatly facilitated by strengthening the exchange of views among the Secretary-General, the Deputy Secretary-General and the Directors on UNCTAD's ongoing work programme, such that the objectives of UNCTAD's publications policy could be kept under regular review. An appropriate forum for such discussions would be the Senior Management Committee (SMC).***

- ***In order to make the review of the publications programme by member States more transparent, and in implementation of paragraph 107 (a) of the Midrand text requesting the Secretary-General of UNCTAD to consult the Working Party at the earliest possible stage in the preparation of his programme budget proposals to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the secretariat should provide member States with an informal paper before its proposals are submitted to New York for review. This informal paper should include a first draft of the work programme and a list of publications with essential data on each publication, including the mandate or other justification; target audience; language versions; and estimates covering the month/year of issue, number of printed pages, number of copies and printing costs if it is to be printed externally.***

Planning parliamentary documentation

24. Once publications have received the green light through the secretariat and intergovernmental processes described above, planning for production can be set in motion. For parliamentary documentation this happens through the planning system for intergovernmental meetings established by the Secretary-General's memorandum of 25 February 1997. Under this system, there is an opportunity for outlines of

documents specifically mandated by intergovernmental bodies to be discussed at a meeting involving all Directors and amended if necessary, before being approved by the Secretary-General. Where relevant, the contribution of other parts of the secretariat to the preparation of a document can also be agreed. The system also makes provision for a policy review meeting at a later stage in the production process during which the policy conclusions and recommendations expected to emerge from the documentation are discussed.

- ***This system appears well-equipped to meet the objectives set for parliamentary documentation, while being flexible and relatively unintrusive. It should, therefore, be considered as an important element of UNCTAD's publications policy. It is recommended, however, that author Divisions should actively seek the intellectual involvement of other Divisions, including by placing outlines and drafts of documents on the Intranet. Moreover, the planning system's operation should be assessed at the time of the Mid-term Review of UNCTAD IX in 1998.***

Planning major reports

25. An important category of publications comprises UNCTAD's three major reports, the *TDR*, the *WIR* and the *LDCR*. Having emerged in response to very specific and different circumstances, these reports have tended to lead separate existences. They could thus benefit from a structured, secretariat-wide approach which would facilitate a regular cross-fertilization of ideas, the avoidance of overlap and, whenever relevant, the promotion of complementarity and consistency. At the same time, they have, in some respects at least, assumed the character of parliamentary documents in that member States have mandated their consideration by the Trade and Development Board. Beyond Geneva, moreover, these reports have attracted an established audience of policy-makers, academics and economic operators. They also receive wide coverage in the media. In the light of these factors, the current approach to the preparation of these reports should be modified and some recommendations are made below for this purpose. A final decision on this matter, however, will need to take account of the outcome of the review of the main economic reports of the United Nations which has been entrusted to UNU/WIDER by the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs in the context of the reform process currently under way in New York.

- ***A panel of Directors and a limited number of other senior staff should be constituted under the chairmanship of the Secretary-General. The panel would intervene at two points in the development process of these reports: the point at which themes are being chosen (in some cases up to 18 months prior to the planned release date) and annotated outlines discussed; and the period during which drafts are written and circulated. This collegiate approach to the planning, production and clearance of UNCTAD's major reports would promote information interchange and inter-Divisional cooperation, complementarity with each other and with similar United Nations reports, and high quality standards, while at the same time retaining the possibility of presenting different perspectives on development issues. This approach would also satisfy the United Nations-wide requirement endorsed by the General Assembly that all major publications should be subject to in-house clearance by a review body.***

- *It is also suggested to: review the length of these reports in order to enhance readability and cut costs; examine the feasibility, together with UNOG, of reducing printing costs through consolidated annual tendering; stagger their release dates to the extent possible so as to increase their impact and facilitate promotion efforts; explore the scope for commercial publishing or co-publishing with a view to securing a broader dissemination*[3]*; and establish a network of academics with whom the panel could consult.*

Formulation and scrutiny of UNCTAD's publications programme

The implementation of the recommendations will enhance transparency in the formulation and scrutiny of UNCTAD's publications programme:

- **The newly-proposed Publications Committee clears a draft publications programme within the framework of the biennial programme budget exercise.**
- **The Working Party on the Medium-term Plan and Programme Budget discusses the draft publications programme informally, on the basis of detailed information on each proposed publication.**
- **UNCTAD submits its proposed programme budget, including the publications programme, to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, taking into account the comments of the Working Party.**
- **The Secretary-General of the United Nations submits his proposed programme budget to the General Assembly.**
- **The Working Party considers the Secretary-General of the United Nations' proposed programme budget covering UNCTAD and transmits its views to CPC and ACABQ.**
- **The Fifth Committee reviews the programme budget, taking into account the views of CPC and ACABQ, and adopts a resolution approving the programme budget for the biennium concerned.**
- **The secretariat actively seeks continuous review of its publications, and in addition, conducts an annual in-depth readers' survey of a select number of publications.**
- **The Trade and Development Board scrutinizes UNCTAD's publications policy.**

B. Production

Criteria and guidelines

26. Within the broad context of the planning processes described above, the production of all publications contained in the approved publications programme should be the unique responsibility of the Directors concerned. In the first instance, this entails adherence to standard United Nations guidelines. These require that a publication: promotes the principles and purposes of the United Nations; contributes directly to the achievement of one or more of UNCTAD's programme budget activities; does not substantially duplicate material already published and readily available; responds to an identified demand from a clearly defined target readership; reaches a standard of intellectual endeavour that reflects credit on the United Nations; be written in a clear and concise style appropriate to the target readership; and be finalized by the set deadline.

27. Furthermore, Directors should ensure that the content of each publication corresponds to a mandate, as established in the publications programme, or in the agendas of intergovernmental bodies or by a decision of the Secretary-General of UNCTAD. Any proposed departures from, or adjustments to, the publications programme should be justified in terms of new legislative mandates or by unforseen circumstances, and submitted for approval to the Secretary-General before work commences.

Parliamentary documentation

28. With regard to parliamentary documentation, the timely preparation of brief, high-quality and action-oriented reports should be a priority goal aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of the intergovernmental machinery and of the organization as a whole. Responsibility for attaining this goal should rest with Directors.

29. The preparation of documentation for intergovernmental meetings is governed by rules established by the General Assembly, the Secretary-General of the United Nations and UNCTAD itself. Despite their clarity and mostly mandatory nature, these rules are not always respected. It is, therefore, recommended that

- ***The existing guidelines be strictly enforced. These permit only one document for each agenda item, and two substantive items per meeting. Moreover, in conformity with the recent decision of the Secretary-General of the United Nations all parliamentary documentation should not exceed 16 pages. As for background documents, these should only be prepared if expressly requested by member States and should also be no longer than 16 pages.***

- ***In order to allow for sufficient time for clearance and editing, and to meet the ten-week deadline for submitting documents for processing and the subsequent six-week deadline for distributing them to member States in all six official languages, all parliamentary documentation should be submitted for clearance 12 weeks ahead of the starting date of a meeting. Each document must contain a short executive summary at the beginning and a brief indication of the main issues requiring intergovernmental consideration at the end.***

- ***The use of the Internet in connection with parliamentary documentation should be further enhanced. In particular, all pre-session documentation should be available on the UNCTAD Web site at least four weeks prior to the relevant meeting. The substantive output of meetings should appear on the Web site as soon as it is in final form.***

Non-parliamentary documentation

30. As for other categories of documentation, Divisions should aim at greater conciseness in the spirit of the recent decision by the Secretary-General of the United Nations to reduce the overall volume of documentation. Under existing guidelines, a broad category of documents such as non-sessional studies and reports produced as part of the approved work programme of an intergovernmental body but not linked to a particular meeting, as well as reports issued with a divisional symbol, have been subject to a limit of 32 pages, "except where the subject or the coverage do not allow". In practice, this limit is exceeded more often that it is respected. It is recommended that

- ***Divisions should be required to make an explicit request, including a substantive justification, when an exemption from the 32-page limit is deemed necessary. Ideally this should take place at the time the publications programme is being prepared.***

- ***Publications in the "information materials" category should be the subject of a consultative process between Divisions and External Relations from their inception to their release.***

Policy clearance

31. An important objective of UNCTAD's publications policy should be to ensure policy consistency across the secretariat and conformity with established guidelines. The Secretary-General's memorandum of 15 April 1996 entrusted Directors with the primary responsibility for the clearance of documents and for the quality of the output of their Divisions. At the same time, it announced the intention of establishing a supervisory mechanism for policy clearance under the authority of the Deputy Secretary-General. It is proposed that

- ***Such a mechanism should be made operational as soon as possible within the context of the planning system for intergovernmental meetings. Publications covered would include parliamentary documentation as well as the recurrent and non-recurrent publications featured in the work programme, with the exception of the three flagship reports, for which a separate process has been proposed. Publications included in the technical category need not be cleared through this mechanism, but should be produced under the full responsibility of Directors, and comply with relevant United Nations guidelines.***

Editorial Board

32. An Editorial Board chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General has existed in UNCTAD since the early 1980s. The Board has played an important role in promoting the exchange of ideas and scholarly discussion, as well as in offering secretariat staff an outlet for their research under their own names. The Board operates an anonymous refereeing system for this purpose. A typical publication produced under the aegis of the Board is the *Discussion Papers* series, which represents a low-cost medium for disseminating independent research on a wide range of issues encompassed by UNCTAD's mandate. There has been a growing demand for these *Papers* from universities and research institutions, and some have requested permission to reproduce individual *Papers*. It is recommended that

- ***The Editorial Board's essential purpose be preserved, in particular its responsibility for encouraging debate and the exchange of ideas through the issuing of publications such as the Discussion Papers and the organization of related seminars.***

Attribution of authorship

33. Traditionally, authorship of United Nations documents has not been attributed to individual staff members. This policy was based on the idea that these documents are produced in the name of the Organization under the authority of the Secretary-General, and it has the advantage of clarity and simplicity. On the other hand, however, it may have been a demotivating factor for staff members, since their own contribution went unrecognized. Nor was it likely to enhance individual responsibility and accountability. In UNCTAD, the policy of the Organization has generally been adhered to, although acknowledgement of individual staff members' contributions has been the practice in the case of the *WIR*.

34. In 1996, the policy of the Organization changed with a view to increasing attribution of authorship. The stated goals of this change were to: acknowledge original intellectual contributions; facilitate dialogue with the international academic and professional communities; provide appropriate recognition for staff; assure staff that their work would be recognized by their peers; increase staff responsibility; and enhance sales potential. The new policy is to apply to "most materials of a technical nature" but not to meetings documents, public information material, and materials of a highly political nature or texts expressly designed to state official United Nations policy. It is recommended that

- ***The policy of UNCTAD should be to encourage the attribution of authorship wherever possible within the framework of the above-mentioned new United Nations rule. A decision on such attribution should be taken on each individual document at the policy clearance stage.***

Editing

35. The purpose of editing is to ensure that documents meet United Nations standards in terms of quality and compliance with editorial guidelines (quality control) and do not contain inappropriate material (safety net). In addition, in an environment where many documents have to be translated, editing is generally regarded as cost-effective, since an edited document is easier and, therefore, cheaper to translate.

36. While the system has generally worked satisfactorily, a number of problems can be identified relating to incomplete coverage, resource constraints and the absence of up-to-date guidelines. The main issue is to determine which documents should be subject to editing and, in particular, whether electronic material should be edited in the same way as conventional documents. The policy of the United Nations with regard to quality control and editing has not changed, and it should therefore be assumed that all documents of all types should continue to be edited. With regard to electronic publications, it has recently been decided that United Nations editorial standards for printed material should be followed. However, to decide that every document should receive full editing could create a bottleneck. The answer could be to apply different degrees of editing to different categories of documents. It is, therefore, recommended that

- ***All documentation, including electronic documentation, issued by UNCTAD should be subject to editing by the Editorial Section.***

- ***The Editorial Section should ensure rapid and flexible editing, particularly for electronic documentation.***

- ***In the interests of speedier and more economic processing of documents, the Editorial Section should provide editorial guidelines for the use of staff and consultants.***

Translation

37. Translation is an important matter, since it involves a question of principle for the United Nations and the more practical consideration of attaining the widest possible readership. Furthermore, because of the high cost of translation ($1000 per page when produced in all six official languages), it also has important financial implications.

38. With regard to parliamentary documentation, United Nations policy calls for translation into all official languages, and UNCTAD policy can only reaffirm this. For other categories, in UNCTAD, past decisions have been taken in the light of the target audience, but the thinking behind these decisions has not always been clear. It is, therefore, important that the question of translation be taken fully into account for each individual document when the publications programme is first compiled, with the need to reach the target audience being reconciled with current guidelines and with the need for economy. As far as Internet is concerned, its importance as a means of attaining "grass roots" audiences for whom the language barrier may be far more significant than in the case of diplomatic, government or research circles must be recognized.

39. With regard to the provision of translation services, delegations have expressed interest in the possibility of outsourcing translation, particularly to developing countries. As the United Nations has established translation services at its main duty stations, UNCTAD has to rely on UNOG for this purpose. The decision as to whether a given text will be translated in-house or contracted out lies with UNOG. In this regard, it should be recalled that delegations expect the highest standards of translation, and that is why the United Nations goes to the expense of recruiting and training its own translators.

40. While UNCTAD is not an independent agent with respect to translation, it can, however, influence the way in which the service is provided. It is pertinent to point out in this context that in his statement to the Fifth Committee on 17 March 1997, the Secretary-General of the United Nations stressed the need to decentralize to locations where work such as translation and printing could be performed more economically. The foregoing discussion suggests that

- ***All parliamentary documentation, including background documentation requested by member States, must continue to be translated into the six official languages.***

- ***For all other publications, the decision on translation should be taken at an early stage when the publications programme is being prepared in the context of the Programme Budget. The main factors to be taken into account should be: (a) the effective attainment of the target audience; and (b) the need for economy.***

- ***For the Internet, UNCTAD should endeavour to produce, as a long-term objective and as technology and resources permit, a service in all the official languages.***

- ***UNCTAD should encourage UNOG to explore the possibility of having recourse to translation services in developing countries whenever feasible, without prejudice to the quality and timeliness of translations.***

Printing

41. Concerns identified in this respect have related to the size of print runs and the need to explore the possibility of outsourcing printing, in particular in developing countries. With regard to the issue of environmentally-friendly printing processes, it was established that all paper used by UNOG is acid-free and all covers are chlorine-free. All used paper, moreover, is recycled.

42. The size of print runs is determined on the basis of three factors, namely the number of copies required for official distribution, the number of copies required for the Division's own readers lists and the number required for public information purposes. Print runs, nevertheless, are relatively small. In 1996, for example, the print runs for the *TDR* and *WIR* were 10,000 each and 6,500 for the *LDCR*.

43. With regard to the provision of printing services, the situation is rather similar to that prevailing in the case of translation in that the decision as to where a particular document should be printed is for UNOG to take, operating on the basis of principles established for the United Nations Secretariat. One of these principles is that, since the United Nations needs to have printing facilities of its own for certain categories of documents (e.g. parliamentary documentation) and that the corresponding investment and standing costs have to be borne, maximum use must be made of these internal facilities. The use of outside printers, therefore, tends to be resorted to for publications requiring special techniques not available cheaply in-house, or when deadlines cannot be met. In the case of UNCTAD, this applies primarily to the *TDR*, the *WIR* and the *LDCR*. When outside printers are used, each publication is the subject of competitive bidding if the estimated cost is above US$25,000. It is, therefore, recommended that

- ***UNCTAD make maximum use of the UNOG printing facilities in accordance with the General Assembly's decision 45/451. When external printing is necessary it should, however, also explore with UNOG the possibility of having recourse to printing and dissemination services in developing countries, without prejudice to the quality and timeliness of the product.***

Monitoring

44. In the past, the monitoring of the documentation production process to ensure that all the deadlines are met has not been sufficiently consistent. It would be desirable to have an early warning system so that problems can be dealt with before they can delay the production process. For this purpose, it is recommended that

- ***A system of active monitoring of the document production process should be established under the responsibility of Intergovernmental Support Service (ISS), which should liaise with Divisions and with the appropriate UNOG services.***

- ***Each Director should designate a documentation focal point or manager who will be responsible for following documentation production in the Division.***

Technical innovation

45. The secretariat is now equipped with the technological means to transfer documents electronically between all offices. At the same time the documents production process continues to be based on the physical movement of paper documents, primarily because of the need for the person responsible for each stage of the process to give his/her authorization by signing. However, the capacity to sign electronically will soon be available, thus making the electronic transfer of documents quite feasible. It is, therefore, recommended that

- ***The secretariat should continue to pursue the project of establishing an electronic documentation production chain and endeavour to complete it by the end of 1997.***

C. Dissemination

Free distribution

46. It has long been United Nations policy that publications are issued primarily for official use and, as such, are distributed free of charge to Governments, intergovernmental agencies, NGOs, the mass media, individual authorities on the subjects treated, and United Nations depositary libraries. They have also been made generally available on the grounds that the public has a right to know what is being said and done in its name and to use the information and ideas so disseminated. In recent years, however, concern has been expressed at the cost implied by such a policy and it is now widely accepted that the free distribution of publications needs to be rationalized.

47. For UNCTAD the challenge is how to reconcile the need to disseminate its publications as widely as possible with the need to identify and reach desired target audiences, while at the same time avoiding duplication and waste. In approaching this issue, it should be borne in mind that potential readers in many developing countries are unable to purchase sales publications and thus rely on their free availability. This consideration also applies to electronic publication since many developing countries have limited access to this medium, or none at all.

48. In addition to the free distribution of publications to official recipients in line with United Nations policy, UNCTAD's Divisions also maintain lists for distributing their publications to specifically targeted end-users. This officially-authorized practice is understandable, since Divisions are best placed to identify the interested audience for individual publications and, indeed, often obtain valuable feedback. However, as the Conference Services Division of UNOG has recently pointed out to UNCTAD and other United Nations departments in Geneva, the distribution of publications via internal mailing lists managed by Divisions can result in duplication. UNOG has therefore requested all departments to have their mailing lists managed by the Distribution and Sales Section. Within UNCTAD there has been a reluctance to relinquish control over internal mailing lists on the grounds that, given the heavy workload of the Section, it could encounter problems performing this task expeditiously and efficiently. The situation that has thus developed is that some divisional lists are managed by UNOG, while others are managed by the Divisions concerned.

49. In order to address these questions, it is recommended that

- ***UNCTAD should explore ways in which free publications which have an identifiable commercial value could be re-issued as sales publications.***

- ***An attempt be made to reduce the number of free copies of UNCTAD's three flagship reports without disadvantaging readers who are genuinely unable to pay. With the help of the author Divisions and of UNOG, certain categories of readers could be offered discounts.***

- ***All addresses contained in internal UNCTAD mailing lists should be centralized in a single, easily-accessible database and organized by subject matter and/or other relevant categories in order to avoid duplication. Divisions should periodically update their respective components of the database.***

- ***Once organized in this way, UNCTAD's mailing lists should be provided to UNOG's Distribution and Sales Section, which will be responsible for the overall mailing of publications. Arrangements should be made to ensure that UNCTAD's publications are***

distributed in a timely and efficient manner, and coordination with the Distribution and Sales Section should be enhanced to this end.

Sales publications

50. The objective of attempts to rationalize the free distribution of publications should be to meet legitimate official needs for publications at the working level while maintaining a potential for earning revenues through sales. At the same time, it should be noted that the prospect of sales revenue - often encouraged by member States - though relevant, should not be a determining factor in the selection of materials for publication. In this regard, the United Nations Finance Manual states that "Through the sale of publications the United Nations makes available for general distribution documents, reports, books, periodicals, microforms and other published material at no cost to the Organization. The sales operation as a whole is intended to provide a profit to the Organization if this can be achieved without adversely affecting the dissemination of information to the public."

51. Not all publications, moreover, are suitable for sale. The form of publication is a matter for administrative decision based on considerations of economy and of estimated sales potential. Regarding this issue, a recent United Nations report (A/C.5/48/10) concludes that no arbitrary minimum sales figure should be established and that the assessment of whether the number of copies expected to be sold is sufficient should take into consideration the nature of the publication, the characteristics of the market for such a publication and the proposed sales price.

52. Responsibility for the commercial dissemination of United Nations publications rests with the Sales and Marketing Section of the Department of Public Information (DPI) in New York. The Geneva Distribution and Sales Section reports to DPI. This responsibility includes the marketing and promotion of titles, liaison with United Nations departments to develop the saleability of publications, providing user and market feedback and the negotiation and sale of rights to external publishers and distributors. UNCTAD should draw on this expertise, to which a valuable commercial dimension has recently been added. It is suggested that

- ***UNCTAD should establish a closer working relationship with the UNOG Distribution and Sales Section, taking advantage of its membership of the recently-revived Geneva Working Group of the Publications Board. A prime objective should be to exploit the undoubted potential for expanding UNCTAD's readership and to help offset production costs through increased sales revenue.***

- ***During the planning phase of the programme budget, author Divisions should be requested to identify those of their planned publications which appear to have revenue potential. The expertise of the Distribution and Sales Section should be solicited at this point.***

Pricing and marketing

53. The United Nations Publications Board has sought to establish a pricing policy that is conducive to ensuring a wide dissemination of publications while maximizing sales revenue. Prices are not based solely on printing costs, but also take into account other costs, such as marketing, design and editing, as well as market and industry circumstances and the quality and content of the publication, from the viewpoint of market appeal. Furthermore, to make United Nations publications more accessible to readers in developing countries, flexibility is also built into the pricing policy and consideration is given to currency exchange rates and other elements affecting their ability to pay.

54. The current methodology and policies for setting retail prices for UNCTAD's publications, however, appear unsatisfactory. The 1996 editions of the *WIR*, *TDR* and *LDCR*, for example, were priced at $45, $48 and $55, respectively, while the UNDP's *Human Development Report* 1996 was priced at $28.50 and the World Bank's *World Development Report* 1995 and *Trends in Developing Countries* 1995 were priced at $19.95 and $28.95, respectively. While it is probably true that the differing sales figures of UNCTAD's flagship reports reflect uneven sales and marketing efforts, lower sales prices, combined with more effective marketing, are likely to result in higher sales figures all around. UNCTAD should, therefore, seek to have a greater influence on the pricing policy for its publications.

55. A related aspect is the treatment of revenue from sales publications. According to current policy, this accrues as miscellaneous income to the United Nations and is administered in accordance with the Financial Regulations and Rules. At the same time there is a growing recognition that, as new markets for United Nations publications are identified and as publishing activities expand, more resources should be devoted to product development. Thought is now being given in New York to the possibility of providing resources to finance activities not funded under available budget resources, such as active promotion of publications, increasing their dissemination and improving quality to enhance their market appeal. In line with this thinking, UNCTAD could request that revenue from the sales of its publications be used for these purposes.

56. The marketing of UNCTAD publications has been uneven over the years and across Divisions. Marketing is the responsibility of the UNOG Distribution and Sales Section in close consultation with author departments. The former is expected to propose publications for issuance as sales publications, identify prospective markets and propose print runs and languages of publications. In consultation with author departments and with graphic designers, the Section can also propose repackaging of documents as sales publications or the creation of new products, as well as the design and production of covers for sales publications. The Section also monitors the production and distribution phases. In the light of past experience, UNCTAD needs to take fuller advantage of these services. Accordingly, it is recommended that

- ***The pricing policy for UNCTAD's sales publications should be reviewed with the UNOG Distribution and Sales Section with a view to taking greater account of market conditions and of the prices of comparable publications.***

- ***UNCTAD should explore together with the Section the possibility of recovering some of the revenue from the sale of its publications for the purpose of reinvesting it in its publications programme.***

- ***UNCTAD should collaborate more closely with the Section to explore more effective ways to market its sales publications. In this context, the use of fliers containing an order coupon should be more widely resorted to, and author Divisions should be encouraged to publicise other, related UNCTAD publications in their own sales publications.***

- ***Free publications having frequent periodicity, such as the UNCTAD Guide to Publications, should be provided on the Internet, or on CD-ROMs to be circulated to developing countries, in particular. Copies should be made available on floppy disks for those countries without access to CD-ROM technology.***

- ***Statistical publications (often consisting of hundreds of pages) should increasingly be disseminated by CD-ROM or by means of an on-line database, via the Internet.***

- ***For publications identified as having sales potential, executive summaries should be systematically placed on the UNCTAD web site. These summaries should be accompanied by order forms for the full, printed version.***

Co-publishing

57. Co-publishing, whereby the United Nations enters into an arrangement with an outside publisher for the publication of a specific product, is regarded by the United Nations as one way of giving its material the widest possible dissemination in as many languages as possible. It must not, however, inhibit the official distribution obligations of the Organization or impair the financial self-sufficiency of its sales operation.

58. The advantages of co-publishing are manifold. It can help increase the dissemination of publications considerably by tapping commercial publishers' promotional know-how and distribution networks, in particular commercial and academic bookstores and book fairs; help contain expenses, since production costs are shared with the external publishers; expand the range of languages in which publications can be produced, for example to include widely spoken developing-country languages; and enhance the visibility of the organization. It should of course be noted that co-publishing can be used for electronic publications as well, and in this connection there would seem to be considerable potential for CD-ROMs containing statistical collections, training manuals and handbooks.

59. There are naturally disadvantages as well. For example, external publishers tend to be interested in working in only the most profitable markets; prices may be higher; the distinguishing presentational features of certain publications can sometimes be lost; and, as shown by the experience of other organizations, there are resource implications in terms of the staff required in-house to monitor activities and negotiate with external publishers.

60. While UNCTAD has engaged in some co-publishing ventures, relationships with external publishers have been ad hoc, and to date no common policy has been established across the secretariat in this regard. For example, the decision to publish externally has sometimes been driven simply by the availability of extrabudgetary funds at a given time, and the practice with regard to "buying back" copies or receiving a certain number of free copies for distribution by UNCTAD has varied.

61. In the light of the above, it is recommended that:

- ***Drawing on the expertise available in UNOG, UNCTAD should pursue co-publishing as a means of expanding the dissemination of its publications, reaching new audiences, in particular within civil society, and enhancing its visibility. To this end, it should seek to identify publications with co-publishing potential at an early stage when the publications programme is being drawn up within the programme budget process.***

- ***UNCTAD should survey the co-publishing arrangements it has entered into in the past with a view to drawing the appropriate lessons and enhancing its negotiating position with outside publishers; to the same end, it should seek to benefit from the experience of other United Nations organizations in this respect.***

- ***In pursuing co-publishing, UNCTAD should explore the possibility of establishing a strategic relationship with publishing houses in both developed and developing countries with a view, for example, to achieving a necessary uniformity of style, enhancing quality through improved copy editing, and obtaining more advantageous terms through economies of scale.***

- ***While seeking to promote co-publishing, UNCTAD must not neglect its obligations to member States in terms of the official distribution of its material.***

Academic Textbooks Review Programme

62. The Academic Textbooks Review Programme run by the Department of Public Information (DPI) in New York seeks to encourage university professors world-wide to adopt relevant United Nations publications as required reading for their course curricula. Special prices are established for publications in the programme to make them more accessible to students. The cost of mailing publications is borne by the reviewer who then decides whether to adopt the publication. Details of the programme are posted on the United Nations Web site and publications selected for review can be ordered directly therefrom.

63. Overall sales under this programme have increased steadily since its inception. UNCTAD's publications, however, have met with only limited success. For example in 1995, following their "adoption", 41 copies of the *WIR* and 25 copies of the *TDR* were sold. The *WIR* sold 85 copies in 1996. This modest performance of UNCTAD's flagship reports compared to other United Nations titles suggests that sales figure could be much higher if a greater effort were made. It is recommended, therefore, that

- ***UNCTAD collaborate more closely with DPI and explore ways to expand the review and adoption of its sales publications, particularly the flagship reports.***

Electronic publications

64. The advent of the Internet represents a true revolution in communications which is also likely to reshape many aspects of publishing. UNCTAD must seek to make maximum use of this in the interest of its member States and the world community at large. In particular, it can expect to enhance its communication with its existing audiences, for example by providing documentation and information on meetings, projects and other activities more quickly; to reach new audiences that were unattainable before because of practical distribution difficulties and costs; to develop completely new products specifically designed for the new medium; to develop new means of substantive interaction with experts throughout the world; and to reduce costs.

65. At the same time, UNCTAD must bear in mind a number of important constraints. First, the access of many developing countries to the Internet is still limited, so care will have to be taken to ensure that the use of the Internet does not jeopardize the access of these countries to UNCTAD products. (CD-ROM technology, while having a potentially important role to play in its own right for the publication of voluminous statistics, might also play a crucial role in helping to resolve this problem.) Second, the prevailing language on the Internet is English, but it is necessary to ensure that the other official languages are not neglected. Third, it will be important to ensure that the use of the Internet to make publications directly accessible is compatible with the policy of enhancing sales.

66. In order to increase the effectiveness of the UNCTAD Web site, it is recommended that

- ***A major effort should be made to ensure that most, if not all, material made available on the site be in French and Spanish in addition to English and, in due course, technology and resources permitting, in the other official languages as well.***

- ***UNCTAD, in cooperation with other international organizations, should pursue technical assistance activities to improve connectivity in the poorer developing countries.***

- ***The contents of the UNCTAD Web site should be reproduced on CD-ROM periodically to provide the information to those without World Wide Web access.***

- ***Divisions should take direct responsibility for authoring those portions of the site under their respective purviews.***

- ***UNCTAD's Information Technology Board (ITB) should continue to provide the monitoring, coordinating and peer review roles necessary to the management of a complex site. In this context, an important function of the Board will be to ensure that UNCTAD takes cognizance of the United Nations guidelines for electronic publishing. Meanwhile, UNCTAD should contribute to the evolution of these guidelines through its representation on the Information Systems Co-ordination Committee (ISCC), a subsidiary body of ACC, and on the Working Group of the Publication Board in Geneva.***

Assessment of impact

67. With regard to assessment, it is difficult to ascertain how well UNCTAD's publications have been received by the intended readership. Past efforts at the central level to obtain feedback systematically have not been successful. Traditional readership surveys previously inserted in every document and publication have, unfortunately, elicited a minimal response, including from Governments. A readership survey form has also been available on the UNCTAD home page on the Internet but this, too, has yielded a negligible response so far. In addition, readership questionnaires have been distributed at all intergovernmental meetings of UNCTAD since June 1995, again with little feedback. Separately, Divisions have often been in direct contact with readers, and there are a number of cases where numerous favourable responses to publications have been received. This situation has a merit in that author units respond directly to the feedback from the readership. It has, however, also prevented UNCTAD from responding to queries from member States regarding reader responses in a systematic manner unless the publications in question were specified in advance.

68. UNCTAD clearly needs to improve readership feedback on its publications. It is, therefore, recommended that

- ***Divisions should comply with United Nations administrative provisions requiring programme managers to actively seek feedback on their publications. These stipulate that for all important publications, the author department should actively seek reviews in technical and specialized journals and, where appropriate, in the general press throughout the world. This should be an essential part of the monitoring and self-evaluation process, and the performance of Divisions should be assessed on the extent to which this has been done.***

- ***To encourage delegations attending meetings to be more responsive, readership survey forms should be distributed and collected in conjunction with the registration process.***

- ***The Web site should be used as an assessment tool. In order to improve feedback, the readership survey form on the Web site should be accompanied by a request for comments. This would trigger an e-mail response to a specified location in UNCTAD.***

- ***Every year, a select number of publications should be subjected to an in-depth scrutiny. This would involve identifying a sample of readers, sending a questionnaire, and following up to ensure that the process yields a high rate of response. The results should***

be reported to member States through the Working Party and could be used for the purpose of the scrutiny of UNCTAD's publications policy by the Board.

- *UNCTAD should explore the feasibility of using a professional citation index (e.g. Lexis-Nexus, Journal of Economic Literature, Institute for Scientific Information).*

IV. FOLLOW-UP OF RECOMMENDATIONS

69. The foregoing review suggests that UNCTAD's publications policy has not been comprehensive enough. It has often been characterized by insufficiently coordinated objectives and has not been endowed with the necessary institutional means to pursue them. Several factors have contributed to this situation. As a department of the United Nations Secretariat, UNCTAD is subordinated to the centralized bodies which lay down and monitor the system-wide publications policy and its related guidelines. On the other hand, the nature of UNCTAD and its intergovernmental machinery call for a tailor-made publications policy while complying with United Nations policies generally.

70. As the "Review of UNCTAD's Publications Policy" (TD/B/43/CRP.4) clearly showed, UNCTAD has long had several valid elements of a publications policy in place. In a number of important respects - the control of the volume and length of documentation is a good example - UNCTAD has been quite innovative as a result of decisions taken by the Trade and Development Board and by the Secretary-General. On the other hand, these elements are not sufficiently comprehensive in terms of coverage. The detailed recommendations made throughout this report seek to remedy this weakness and to give UNCTAD a publications policy which conforms to the publications policy of the United Nations; attains the goals which UNCTAD set itself at Midrand; enhances transparency vis-à-vis member States; encourages an intellectually stimulating and creative environment for research and discussion both within the secretariat and with various outside audiences; assimilates modern technologies in order to improve UNCTAD's impact and outreach; and makes the most cost-effective use of resources possible.

71. A further weakness is that responsibilities for implementing publications policy are dispersed within the UNCTAD secretariat and largely exercised without adequate coordination and central oversight. In response to this finding, it is recommended that

- ***An UNCTAD Publications Committee should be established to assume overall responsibility for overseeing the effective implementation of UNCTAD's publications policy; and for developing further innovations.***

- ***The Committee should be chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General and be composed of the Directors and representatives of the Office of the Secretary-General, the Office of the Deputy Secretary-General, Programme Planning and Assessment, Intergovernmental Support Services and the Information Technology Board.***

- ***The Committee should initiate the planning of the publications programme well in advance of the Programme Budget cycle. In examining the publications programme proposed by the Divisions, the Committee will, in particular, seek to ensure that publications respect the United Nations criteria, comply with mandates, reflect priorities and correspond to real needs. In this exercise, the Committee should be guided by the lessons learned through the feedback received via the proposed assessment mechanisms during the previous biennium.***

- ***After the programme budget has been approved by the General Assembly, the Committee will interact with Divisions in the implementation of the publications programme. In this context, Divisions will be expected to inform the Committee of any proposed departures from the publications programme so that it can advise the Secretary-General accordingly.***

- ***The Committee will liaise with the Geneva Working Group of the Publications Board and with the UNOG Distribution and Sales Section and establish close working relationships with them.***

- ***The Committee will be responsible for monitoring the implementation by UNCTAD of such measures as are decided in New York in connection with the targeted 25 per cent reduction in documentation by the end of 1998.***

72. This report establishes the need for UNCTAD to have a coherent and effective publications policy. The recommendations made in this report attempt to provide the necessary elements of such a policy. These recommendations, however, may also carry modest implications for the allocation of resources which will need to be addressed.

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Notes

1. The Task Force was set up by the Secretary-General of UNCTAD and was composed of Mr. V. Busuttil (Chairman) and Mr. M. C. Bonello, Ms. J. Butler, Ms. G. Kohler, Mr. C. MacFarquhar, Mr. P. Robertson, Mr. A. Whitley and Mr. M. Igarashi (Secretary).

2. The term "Divisions" refers to UNCTAD's substantive sub-programmes and therefore also covers the Office of the Special Coordinator for Least Developed, Land-locked and Island Developing Countries.

3. See paragraphs 57-61 for a fuller treatment of co-publishing.